

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-17

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6743

INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

USCINCSO

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EO 11652: N/A

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SUBJ: PANAMA REQUESTS CONDEMNATION OF US AT MEXICO CITY SCIENCE
MEETING

1. MR. STANLEY GREENFIELD, DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR OF EPA, WHO IS WITH DR. EDUARDO ECHEVERRIA (THE BROTHER OF MEXICO'S PRESIDENT), CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL TOPIC OF THE AAS/CONACYT CONFERENCE ON "SCIENCE AND MAN IN THE AMERICAS" CURRENTLY MEETING IN MEXICO CITY, ADVISED SCICOUNS THE FOLLOWING AT THE AAAS RECEPTION LATE JUNE 28.

2. THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF PANAMA ADDRESSED A CABLE TO DR. ECHEVERRIA AND REQUESTED THAT IT BE READ TO THE MEETING AT THE OPENING SESSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT JUNE 28. ACCORDING TO MR. GREENFIELD, THE MESSAGE STATED THAT THE GOP HAD LEARNED THAT THE USG PLANNED TO PUMP SALT WATER INTO ONE OF THE FRESH WATER LAKES IN THE PANAMA CANAL SYSTEM TO RAISE THE LEVEL SO THAT LARGER SHIPS COULD PASS. THE MESSAGE WENT ON TO STATE THAT THIS QTE PLAN UNQTE IS ENERGETICALLY OPPOSED BY PANAMA BECAUSE IT WOULD BE DISASTROUS FOR THE ECOLOGY OF THE AREA AND FOR THE LIVELIHOOD OF THE INHABITANTS OF SOME 80 SMALL VILLAGES. THE FOREIGN MINISTER REQUESTED THAT THE CONFERENCE ADOPT A RESOLUTION CONDEMNING THIS DASTARDLY

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ACT OF THE USG.

3. GREENFIELD, WHO WAS CHAIRING THE SESSION, INTERPOSED NO OBJECTION TO THE MESSAGE BEING READ BY DR. ECHEVERRIA, BUT RESERVED THE RIGHT TO COMMENT. IN HIS COMMENTS, GREENFIELD STATED THE PURPOSES OF THE MEETING, WHICH ARE TO EXCHANGE SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCE, ADDING THAT BY MUTUAL CONSENT OF THE TWO SPONSORING AGENCIES, CONACYT AND THE AAAS, IT WILL DRAW UP NO RECOMMENDATIONS OR RESOLUTIONS. HE STATED FURTHER THAT THE AAAS, CO-SPONSOR, IS PROFESSIONAL, NON-GOVERNMENTAL IN CHARACTER, HAVING NOTHING TO DO WITH THE USG. HE FOUND THE PROPOSAL OUT OF ORDER.

4. THE EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT NO RESOLUTION WAS PRESENTED AND THAT MR. GREENFIELD IS ENDEAVORING TO OBTAIN A COPY OF THE TELEGRAM.

5. COMMENT: EDUARDO ECHEVERRIA IS A MEDICAL DOCTOR AND CHAIRMAN OF THE TECHNICAL COUNCIL OF THE UNDERSECRETARIAT OF HEALTH FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT. HE IS, THEREFORE, A MAN OF SCIENCE, AND THROUGH HIS POSITION WELL ACQUAINTED WITH THE EPA AND THE BROAD USG ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM. HE HAS ALSO BEEN QUITE FRIENDLY TO THE US AND A FREQUENT VISITOR. THE EMBASSY HAS NO CLUE AS TO WHY HE LET HIMSELF BE USED TO PUBLICIZE SUCH AN UNSUPPORTED AND QUESTIONABLE ACCUSATION, WHICH MOREOVER WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE NO SCIENTIFIC BASIS WHATSOEVER.

6. AS THE EMBREP COMMENTED TO MR. GREENFIELD, THE PANAMA CANAL LOCKS, NOT THE DEPTH OF THE LAKES, REPRESENT THE LIMITING FACTOR PRECLUDING THE PASSAGE OF EVER LARGER SHIPS. MORE WATER WOULD PRESENT NO SOLUTION. IN ADDITION, THE PUMPING OF WATER FROM SEA LEVEL WOULD REPRESENT QUITE AN ENGINEERING FEAT FOR WHICH THERE APPEARS TO BE NO NEED. IN SHORT THE REPORTED QTE PLAN UNQTE DOES NOT SEEM TO MAKE SENSE. FURTHERMORE, THE USG, THROUGH THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTIONS' BIRD SANCTUARY ON ONE OF THE ISLANDS IN THE CANAL LAKE CONNECTIONS, HAS BEEN ZEALOUSLY GUARDING THE NATURAL HABITAT OF THE WILDLIFE OF THE AREA FOR SEVERAL DECADES.

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7. THE EMBASSY HAS NOT YET SEEN A COPY OF THE GOP MESSAGE, HENCE THE REPORT PRESENTED HEREIN REPRESENTS THE EMBREP'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE MATTER.
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